

Joint Statement by President Obama and Prime Minister Mohammad Nawaz Sharif of Pakistan

October 22, 2015

At the invitation of President Obama, Prime Minister Sharif paid an official visit to Washington from October 20 to 23, 2015 that reinforced the commitment of both leaders to an enduring U.S.-Pakistan partnership, a prosperous Pakistan, and a more stable region. President Obama and Prime Minister Sharif held wide-ranging discussions at the White House today. The two leaders expressed their conviction that a resilient U.S.-Pakistan partnership is vital to regional and global peace and security and reaffirmed their commitment to address evolving threats in South Asia.

An Enduring Partnership

President Obama and Prime Minister Sharif reaffirmed that a mutual commitment to democracy is a key pillar of the U.S.-Pakistan partnership. President Obama commended Prime Minister Sharif's leadership in strengthening and consolidating Pakistan's democratic institutions. Building on this progress, President Obama and Prime Minister Sharif expressed their desire to expand the bilateral relationship in areas outside the traditional security realm in recognition of the multifaceted issues facing both countries, including: trade and investment; education, science and technology; clean, efficient and affordable energy; efforts to counter climate change; economic growth; regional integration; rule of law; people-to-people and cultural ties; and support for democratic principles. President Obama underscored the importance of Pakistan's role, as one of the largest Muslim democracies, in using its influence in support of peace, security, development, and human rights around the world. Both leaders committed to build on the ongoing U.S.-Pakistan Strategic Dialogue to advance progress in these and other areas.

The two leaders emphasized the need to maintain the positive momentum in promoting people-to-people contacts and parliamentary exchanges. They also acknowledged the important role played by the Pakistani diaspora in the United States and the contributions that this community has traditionally made in strengthening the bilateral relationship.

Economic Growth, Trade, and Investment

The President and Prime Minister affirmed that economic growth in Pakistan provides the surest foundation for the prosperity of its people and the security of the region. President Obama commended Pakistan's reform program, which has re-established macroeconomic stability through a combination of prudent fiscal and monetary policies, the rebuilding of foreign exchange reserves, and continuing reforms in the energy sector. Prime Minister Sharif reaffirmed his commitment to consolidate economic gains and to continue to implement his government's reform agenda, including the government's commitment to complete the set of home grown reforms that is being supported by the World Bank Group, the Asian Development Bank, the International Monetary Fund, and other multilateral financial institutions. The two sides indicated their intent to continue robust macroeconomic cooperation through the Economic and Finance Working Group as an element of the Strategic Dialogue.

The leaders reaffirmed that the United States and Pakistan have a mutual interest in expanding bilateral trade and investment. President Obama indicated that the United States will help Pakistan create conditions for accelerated trade and investment-driven growth. The leaders noted the reauthorization of the General System of Preferences (GSP) program and acknowledged the importance of the U.S.-Pakistan Trade and Investment Framework Agreement (TIFA) process. Prime Minister Sharif reiterated the importance of market access for Pakistan as the most effective, mutually beneficial, and durable form of bilateral economic partnership. The leaders recognized the success of the Joint Action Plan to expand trade and investment, established after Prime Minister Sharif's 2013 visit, and acknowledged their intent to augment the plan. President Obama conveyed that Pakistani companies are eligible to participate in U.S. Department of Defense procurement opportunities related to Afghanistan : U.S. military forces :: Deployment operations in Afghanistan, in accordance with U.S. law and regulation, and encouraged Pakistan to pursue accession to the General Procurement Agreement of the World Trade Organization. The leaders also noted the U.S.-Pakistan Memorandum of Understanding on Women's Economic Empowerment and Entrepreneurship, signed at the 2014 TIFA, which includes the efforts of the U.S.-Pakistan Women's Council.

The leaders reaffirmed their commitment to advancing economic connectivity between Pakistan and its neighbors to promote regional prosperity. The President reaffirmed U.S. support for the Afghanistan-Pakistan Transit Trade Agreement, the Central Asia South Asia Electricity Transmission and Trade Project (CASA-1000) electricity corridor, the Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India (TAPI) natural gas pipeline project, and other measures to enhance regional economic connectivity and growth. President Obama welcomed Pakistan's accession to the TIR Convention, which could facilitate trade throughout the region. Both leaders acknowledged that strengthening Pakistan's trade and transit ties with its neighbors is needed to promote prosperity in Pakistan and the region.

Education and Civil Society Cooperation

President Obama and Prime Minister Sharif emphasized the value of investing in higher and basic education. Reflecting this, the United States and Pakistan re-instituted an Education, Science and Technology Working Group under the bilateral Strategic Dialogue, and in June, launched three University Centers for Advanced Studies in agriculture, energy, and water research. This is in addition to nineteen existing university partnerships between U.S. and Pakistani institutions and the highest-funded Fulbright scholarship program in the world. Welcoming the establishment of the "U.S.-Pakistan Knowledge Corridor" in June 2015, the two leaders directed their respective governments to intensify cooperation within this important framework in consonance with the priorities set out in Pakistan's Vision 2025. In the near term, the two governments intend to double joint funding for a new round of research grants under the U.S.-Pakistan Science and Technology Cooperation Agreement.

Building on important cooperation in basic education to date, the Leaders welcomed the launch of the Let Girls Learn Initiative in Pakistan, a global effort led by the United States, which will provide 200,000 Pakistani girls access to education and the tools they need to succeed in life.

The President commended Prime Minister Sharif's commitment to education as a priority, demonstrated through the doubling of Pakistan's higher education budget since 2013 and the government's goal of doubling expenditures for education from two percent to four percent of gross domestic product by 2018.

The Leaders recognized the importance of civil society to the fundamental health and stability of all democratic societies. International nongovernmental organizations (INGOs) and civil society groups can contribute toward the promotion of Pakistan's national development goals and can complement the work of the government to address the needs of the underprivileged populations, promote human rights, and strengthen democratic governance. The Prime Minister mentioned that recently issued policy guidelines were intended by the Government of Pakistan to facilitate the functioning of INGOs, and further stated that these guidelines will be reviewed and implemented in consultation with all stakeholders. The President noted that policy guidelines governing INGOs should be transparent and consistent with international norms so as to facilitate the important work of these organizations.

Climate Change and Energy

President Obama reaffirmed the U.S. commitment to strong cooperation in the energy sector. The leaders announced the formation of a new U.S.-Pakistan Clean Energy Partnership, based on the initial work of the April 2015 Energy Working Group under the U.S.-Pakistan Strategic Dialogue. At its core, the Partnership aims to facilitate private sector investment in Pakistan's energy sector, including generation, transmission, and distribution. Through the Partnership, the United States and Pakistan will cooperate to: attract local and international investment; develop an investment plan for expanding the role of clean energy systems; expand transmission capacity through selected infrastructure projects; and mobilize development financing to help attract private sector investments in hydropower, wind, solar, and natural gas projects. The two leaders noted their cooperation in the development of Pakistan's domestic oil and gas resources and liquefied natural gas sectors. President Obama expressed support for Pakistan's efforts to secure funding for the DiamerBhasha and Dasu dams to help meet Pakistan's energy and water needs.

President Obama and Prime Minister Sharif expressed their commitment to press for an ambitious agreement on climate change at the Paris Climate Conference in December. The United States and Pakistan welcome the fact that the United States has communicated its Intended Nationally Determined Contribution (INDC) and that Pakistan stated its plan to soon submit its INDC. The leaders underscored the importance of longer-range efforts to transition to low-carbon economies and of continued, robust financial support to help developing countries build low-carbon and climate-resilient societies. Further, to advance global efforts to address a leading cause of climate change, President Obama and Prime Minister Sharif affirmed that their respective countries intend to work together to amend the Montreal Protocol this year to curb the production and consumption of hydrofluorocarbons.

Both sides stressed the importance of adaptation to the adverse impacts of climate change. As a country particularly vulnerable to the effects of climate change, Pakistan has suffered major floods, heat waves, and droughts in recent years. President Obama offered continued U.S. support to Pakistan to build infrastructure and organizational capacity to counter natural disasters and provide relief to the affected populations.

Promoting Global Health

President Obama and Prime Minister Sharif discussed the importance of enhancing measurable capability of Pakistan to prevent, detect, and respond to infectious diseases. Building from that shared understanding, they reaffirmed their commitment to fully implement the Global Health Security Agenda (GHSa), including a mutually-developed five-year plan to achieve the GHSa targets and advance the World Health Organization

International Health Regulations, with a view to advance global cooperation across sectors to counter biological threats, whether naturally occurring, accidental or deliberate. President Obama and Prime Minister Sharif also discussed efforts to improve the health of mothers and children in Pakistan and globally.

Regional Security and Counterterrorism

President Obama condemned the December 2014 terrorist attack by the Tehrik-e Taliban Pakistan (TTP) in which 140 school children were killed.

The leaders discussed the importance of continued cooperation against terrorists and violent extremist groups. President Obama affirmed Pakistan's role as a key counterterrorism partner and recognized the sacrifices that Pakistani civilians, military, and law enforcement personnel have made over the years as they confront terrorism and militant groups. The President expressed particular appreciation for Pakistan's ongoing support to degrade and ultimately defeat al-Qa'ida and its affiliates, noting that this partnership has helped to decimate the group's leadership and operational capacity and has disrupted plots against the U.S. homeland. The President also honored the sacrifices of the Pakistani security forces in Operation Zarb-e-Azb and other operations, which have degraded the ability of militants to plan and execute terrorist attacks and noted further steps being taken in this regard in line with the National Action Plan. In turn, the Prime Minister thanked the United States for its support in bolstering Pakistan's counter-terrorism capacity.

President Obama and Prime Minister Sharif renewed their common resolve to promote peace and stability throughout the region and to counter all forms of extremism and terrorism.

Both leaders expressed their commitment to advance an Afghan-owned and -led peace and reconciliation process between the Afghan government and the Afghan Taliban, and called on Taliban leaders to enter into direct talks with Kabul and work toward a sustainable peace settlement.

President Obama commended Pakistan for hosting and facilitating the first public talks between the Afghan government and the Taliban in July 2015 and highlighted the opportunity presented by Pakistan's willingness to facilitate a reconciliation process that would help end insurgent violence in Afghanistan. Prime Minister Sharif reaffirmed that Pakistan's territory will not be used against any other country and noted that this is an obligation of all countries in the region. Both leaders affirmed that regional peace and stability required the prevention of attacks across the Pakistan-Afghanistan border. The Prime Minister outlined the actions that Pakistan is taking under the National Action Plan to ensure that the Taliban—including the Haqqani Network—are unable to operate from the soil of Pakistan. The leaders reaffirmed that coordinated management of the Pakistan-Afghanistan border and orderly return of Afghan refugees from Pakistan are fundamental to enhancing security.

President Obama and Prime Minister Sharif stressed that improvement in Pakistan-India bilateral relations would greatly enhance prospects for lasting peace, stability, and prosperity in the region.

The two leaders expressed concern over violence along the Line of Control, and noted their support for confidence-building measures and effective mechanisms that are acceptable to both parties. The leaders emphasized the importance of a sustained and resilient dialogue process between the two neighbors aimed at resolving all outstanding territorial and other disputes, including Kashmir, through peaceful means and working together to address mutual concerns of India and Pakistan regarding terrorism. In this context, the Prime Minister

apprised the President about Pakistan's resolve to take effective action against United Nations-designated terrorist individuals and entities, including Lashkar-e-Tayyiba and its affiliates, as per its international commitments and obligations under UN Security Council resolutions and the Financial Action Task Force.

Acknowledging the ongoing critical counterterrorism efforts that have driven the robust U.S.-Pakistan security cooperation since September 11, 2001, President Obama and Prime Minister Sharif affirmed that this security relationship has been and will continue to be integral to regional stability. Both leaders noted that the stability of South Asia depended on cooperation among all neighbors to suppress all extremist and militant groups operating in the region.

Highlighting the quickly evolving extremist landscape from the Sahel to South Asia, the President and Prime Minister noted with satisfaction that the United States and Pakistan are working closely to counter emerging terrorist groups such as the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL)/Da'esh in South Asia. The Prime Minister reiterated Pakistan's firm resolve not to allow any ISIL/Da'esh footprint in Pakistan. The leaders also reiterated their commitment to combat the extremist ideology that propels such groups.

President Obama raised his concern regarding the U.S. nationals being held hostage by terrorist groups in the region. The Prime Minister indicated that Pakistan would assist in every way possible with the safe return of American and other hostages.

Defense Cooperation

Taking note of the robust bilateral defense cooperation between their two countries, including recent military engagements, exercises, and consultations on regional security, President Obama and Prime Minister Sharif expressed satisfaction with the cooperation achieved in defense relations and reaffirmed that this partnership should endure.

Prime Minister Sharif conveyed appreciation for U.S. security assistance in support of Pakistan's counter-terrorism, counter-insurgency, counter-narcotics, and maritime security operations and expressed hope of broadening bilateral defense cooperation in areas that serve the two countries' mutual interest. President Obama noted Pakistan's positive efforts to counter improvised explosive devices (IEDs) and both leaders resolved to continue working together to disrupt the threat posed by these devices. They recognized that a stable and peaceful Pakistan-Afghanistan border was important for the success of counterterrorism, counterinsurgency, and counter-IED efforts. They also underscored the critical significance of effective border coordination mechanisms between Pakistan and Afghanistan in achieving these objectives. The two leaders reaffirmed that the defense consultative group mechanism has been critical in stimulating defense partnership and resolved to explore new avenues of enhancing defense collaboration.

Cybersecurity

Recognizing the opportunities and challenges presented by information and communications technologies, President Obama and Prime Minister Sharif affirmed that international cooperation is essential to make cyberspace secure and stable. Both leaders endorsed the consensus report of the 2015 UN Group of Governmental Experts in the Field of Information and Telecommunications in the Context of International Security. The leaders looked forward to further multilateral engagement, and discussion of cyber issues as part of the U.S.-Pakistan Strategic Dialogue.

Strategic Stability, Nuclear Security, and Nonproliferation

President Obama and Prime Minister Sharif recognized the shared interest in strategic stability in South Asia. The two leaders underscored that all sides should continuously act with maximum restraint and work jointly toward strengthening strategic stability in South Asia. They acknowledged the importance of regional balance and stability in South Asia and pursuing increased transparency and uninterrupted dialogue in support of peaceful resolution of all outstanding disputes.

President Obama and Prime Minister Sharif discussed the continuing threat of nuclear terrorism. The United States and Pakistan committed to work together to make the Nuclear Security Summit hosted by President Obama next year a success. President Obama welcomed Pakistan's constructive engagement with the Nuclear Security Summit process and its cooperation with the International Atomic Energy Agency and other international forums.

The leaders noted Pakistan's efforts to improve its strategic trade controls and enhance its engagement with multilateral export control regimes. Recognizing the importance of bilateral engagement in the Security, Strategic Stability and Non-Proliferation Working Group, the two leaders noted that both sides will continue to stay engaged to further build on the ongoing discussions in the working group.

Conclusion

The two leaders affirmed their common resolve to continue working together to address the issues of greatest interest to both nations. Building on the foundation of the Enhanced Partnership for Pakistan Act, President Obama reiterated a commitment to comprehensive bilateral cooperation through both the public and private sectors, into the future. The leaders committed to fostering a deeper, stronger, multi-dimensional partnership based on mutual respect, trust and understanding to cooperatively tackle the global challenges of the 21st century.

NOTE: An original was not available for verification of the content of this joint statement.

Categories: Joint Statements : Pakistan, Prime Minister Sharif.

Names: Sharif, Mohammad Nawaz.

Subjects: Afghanistan : Reconciliation efforts; Arms and munitions : Nuclear weapons and material :: Nonproliferation efforts; Defense and national security : Cybersecurity :: Strengthening efforts; Environment : Climate change; Environment : United Nations Climate Change Conference; India : Relations with Pakistan; Iraq : Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) terrorist organization; Pakistan : Counterterrorism efforts, cooperation with U.S.; Pakistan : Economic growth and development; Pakistan : Education, strengthening efforts; Pakistan : Energy cooperation with U.S.; Pakistan : Federally Administered Tribal Areas, suspected terrorist safe havens; Pakistan : Health and medical care, promotion efforts; Pakistan : Prime Minister; Pakistan : Relations with India; Pakistan : Relations with U.S.; Pakistan : Security cooperation with U.S.; Pakistan : Taliban movement; Pakistan : Tehrik-i-Taliban terrorist organization; Pakistan : Trade with U.S.; Pakistan : Women, status; Syria : Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) terrorist organization; Terrorism : Al Qaida terrorist organization; Terrorism : Counterterrorism efforts; Terrorism : September 11, 2001, attacks; Terrorism : Terrorism : Lashkar e-Taiba terrorist organization; United Nations : Framework Convention on Climate Change; Women and girls : "Let Girls Learn" initiative, White House.

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